



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Little Acorns - Crossgates
Grounds of Crossgates CP School
Crossgates
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 6RE**

Date of inspection: November 2018

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the setting's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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Context

Little Acorns Crossgates is an English medium setting just outside Llandrindod Wells in Powys local authority. The setting is registered for 19 children per session from the ages of three to four years. It offers early years education sessions from 9am to 11.30am and 1pm to 3.30pm during school term time, for five days each week. The setting also provides care outside these hours and runs a holiday club during school holidays. At the time of the inspection, there were 27 children in receipt of funded early education.

There are three part-time practitioners and a full-time setting leader, who took up her post in September 2015.

The setting currently has no children identified as having additional learning needs. No children speak Welsh at home and none have English as an additional language. A very few are looked after by the local authority.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspected the setting in August 2018 and it is the setting's first Estyn inspection.

Summary

The setting's current performance	Good
The setting's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

- Children enjoy their learning and most make good progress during their time at the setting across all foundation phase areas of learning
- Most children communicate effectively with one another and with adults; they enjoy talking about their activities and sharing their ideas with others
- Many develop good early literacy skills and are particularly interested in sharing books and listening to stories
- Close working relationships between practitioners and children and a safe, caring environment enable children to develop self-confidence and try new experiences
- Practitioners collaborate effectively to plan stimulating learning experiences that engage and challenge children well
- The indoor and outdoor learning environments are stimulating and practitioners use resources creatively to enhance them and sustain children's interest

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The setting leader has a clear vision for the setting, based on securing and sustaining high quality provision and good outcomes for children
- A skilful and committed management committee supports the setting leader and practitioners well
- Self-evaluation and improvement planning processes are systematic and draw on a suitably wide range of evidence from all stakeholders
- Leaders and practitioners have a good understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for improvement
- Identified priorities are relevant and, over time, are leading to continuous improvement
- Partnerships, especially those with parents and the primary school, benefit children's wellbeing and enhance their educational experience

Recommendations

- R1 Refine planning and assessment so that it is proportionate and manageable and has maximum impact on children's outcomes
- R2 Improve opportunities to encourage children to practise their early writing and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across all areas of learning
- R3 Develop a clear process for identifying children with additional learning needs and securing appropriate support for them

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Many children enter the setting with literacy, numeracy, physical, personal and social skills that are higher than expected. During their time at the setting, most make valuable progress in all areas of learning. Many recall previous learning well and this gives them confidence to try new activities and tackle new problems.

Most children speak confidently, and a few are particularly articulate, using mature language patterns and an extensive vocabulary. Most enter into conversation easily with unfamiliar adults, especially when talking about themselves and their activities. Many children respond correctly to instructions in Welsh, for example when asked to sit on the red circle. During snack time, most request their drinks and fruit in Welsh, answer simple questions and use please and thank you. A few are beginning to use the language as they play, for example, counting the number of people they can put on an aeroplane in the small world area.

Nearly all children show an interest in books in English and Welsh. At the start of the session, most choose a favourite book and talk to their friends about the story and pictures. For example, they count the number of items on the page and identify the colours in a familiar Welsh book. Nearly all children handle books carefully, and know the conventions of reading. They turn the pages one at a time and, after the last page, they say 'the end' and close the book decisively. Nearly all children listen carefully to stories read aloud by adults and respond appropriately. Older and more able children describe the characters' expressions and explain how these link to the story, for example the mean cat who chases a mouse. Many children develop their early writing skills successfully through mark-making in focused activities. Older children talk about 'learning to write' as they work, making the link between these activities and communicating meaning through writing. However, children only occasionally choose to use these skills in the mark-making area or in other areas of the setting.

Many children develop a good understanding of early number, shape and measure. Most count to five reliably, with older and more able children moving on to ten or more. They use mathematical vocabulary correctly in their play and activities, comparing long and short, for example, when cutting a piece of sticky tape to wrap a parcel, and identifying circular and square crackers and triangular cheese at snack time. They become familiar with the passing of time and the relationships between the days of the week and seasons of the year during circle time activities.

A majority of children develop generally appropriate early ICT skills using a range of simple equipment. A few play simple educational games in English and Welsh on tablet computers, and operate digital cameras competently to photograph their work, or take pictures of one another, for example, when comparing eye colour. Many are beginning to understand the role this technology plays in real life, for example by having a simple alarm clock and light box in the bedroom role play area. However, children do not practise their ICT skills often enough in all areas of learning to develop their skills effectively.

Most children have good physical skills, moving confidently around the indoor and outdoor environment. They control their bodies well during a music and movement activity, for example running like a tiger, jumping, and stretching up high and out wide when pretending to fly. Most have well-developed fine motor skills. They control a wide range of mark-making equipment skilfully to create free marks, while older children copy increasingly intricate patterns accurately in preparation for writing.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children settle well on arrival at the setting. They understand and follow the daily routines happily, participating confidently and enjoying adult-led learning and the activities they choose themselves.

Nearly all children are well-behaved, courteous and considerate. They flourish in the secure environment of the setting and respond positively to the high expectations of practitioners, with whom they have positive working relationships. They show respect for visitors, while having enough self-confidence to talk readily to them as they work and play. Most children co-operate with one another particularly well for their age. They share toys and equipment sensibly, understand the importance of taking turns and are developing the perseverance and self-control to play purposefully with or alongside their peers to reach a shared goal. For example, two boys worked productively together in the elves' workshop to make decorations and wrap Christmas presents.

Children contribute effectively to topic-planning by talking to practitioners about what they would like to learn and making suggestions for the areas in the setting. For example, they recently helped to change the role play area into a bedroom, adding items like pyjamas, a clock and posters on the wall. This has encouraged interest in the area and nurtured children's curiosity in the resources that are available to them and the activities on offer.

Most children are developing their independence skills well. For example, many change their footwear and put their coats on to go outside with very little help. Nearly all know that they should wash their hands after going to the toilet and before eating with prompting from adult. Nearly all children serve themselves with milk or water, and most choose to eat a wide variety of fruit and healthy snacks at snack time.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

Practitioners collaborate well together to provide a wide range of learning experiences that interest, engage and challenge most children well. Practitioners encourage children's involvement in planning topics and setting up areas within the setting. This motivates children well because they can see and benefit from the changes that practitioners make in response to their suggestions.

Curriculum planning ensures that children make good progress in all areas of learning and in relation to foundation phase outcomes. Practitioners ensure that planning is flexible enough to respond to the changing needs and interests of the children or special events. For example, after making Diwali lamps out of clay,

practitioners added a wider range of modelling materials to the malleable area in the setting because they identified a need for pupils to practise their modelling skills in a less structured, more creative way.

The setting provides good opportunities to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills. Practitioners' planning ensures that children build their skills systematically across all areas of learning. They evaluate how well children learn and modify their plans carefully in response to their needs. For example, they recognised recently that children were not visiting the mathematical development area often enough. In response, they incorporated better opportunities for developing numeracy in other areas in the setting instead. As a result, children have begun to use their numeracy skills more effectively and naturally in their daily activities. Very recently, leaders have introduced a range of challenges to each area to develop children's skills in literacy, numeracy and problem solving. However, provision for children to develop their early writing and ICT skills across the areas of continuous and enhanced provision is limited.

There are plenty of opportunities for children to practise and consolidate their Welsh language skills every day. Provision is particularly effective at circle time and snack time when practitioners encourage the children to talk about the weather, respond to simple questions, and encourage them to count and ask for things in Welsh. Provision for children to learn about their locality and culture is generally appropriate. Practitioners introduce them to Welsh festivals, such as St David's Day, and take them to visit places in the locality, including a nearby café and garage to enhance their topics. The setting is gradually increasing opportunities for widening children's understanding of other cultures.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a good understanding of the principles and ethos of the foundation phase and its curriculum. They use a suitable variety of approaches to engage children in learning and sustain their interest and enthusiasm. They provide a good balance of adult-led and child-led activities that focus closely on developing and practising children's skills across the foundation phase areas of learning. Practitioners are good language role-models who encourage children to ask questions and talk purposefully to one another and to adults as they learn.

Strong working relationships between practitioners and children contribute to the setting's positive and calm learning environment. Practitioners know the children well. As a result, when children are engaged in activities they have chosen for themselves, adults know when to intervene sensitively to support them to move forward, but are confident enough to allow them to persevere independently when appropriate.

Practitioners carry out regular observational assessments of children that focus on how well they develop specific skills. They use this information diligently, alongside the foundation phase framework, to plan for children's next steps in learning and provide various levels of challenge to meet the needs of all children. For example, practitioners lead an adult-led mark-making activity using aluminium foil that enables younger children to experiment freely with large equipment, while older children use the same surface to practise more advanced, detailed patterns in

preparation for writing, using a selection of smaller writing implements. Although this approach is systematic, these assessments do not always focus well enough on individual children's specific areas of weakness and the process is not always manageable or sustainable for practitioners.

Practitioners share useful information with parents about their children's progress through informal discussion and an end-of year report.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting's provision to support children's health and wellbeing is effective. Daily opportunities to keep healthy through outdoor play and music and movement sessions benefit all children. These activities encourage them to enjoy physical activity and the outdoors, and benefit their listening skills, gross motor development and personal skills. Snack time is particularly effective in developing children's understanding of personal hygiene, healthy eating and drinking, communication and social skills.

Appropriate policies and procedures ensure that children are safe in the setting. Practitioners follow agreed routines that help to ensure that children feel secure and are comfortable to seek help and support if they need it. Practitioners have high expectations of children's behaviour and deal sensitively with any disagreements. Opportunities for children to think about their behaviour and responses help to shape their moral and social skills well. Visits to a local farm and having a picnic by the lake help children to think about the world around them and develop a sense of spirituality. Celebrating St David's Day and World Book Day provide useful experiences to develop their cultural awareness.

Practitioners have received suitable training that is improving their understanding of the possible additional learning needs of children. The setting has appropriate links with professional services, including speech and language therapists and health visitors, who provide children with support when necessary. Practitioners know the children well and discuss their individual needs in regular staff meetings. However, the setting's processes for identifying children with additional learning needs and referring them for specialist support are not systematic enough to support practitioners fully.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting has a caring and nurturing ethos that promotes equality for all, while meeting the needs of individuals successfully. Practitioners are successful in encouraging children to learn about, and develop tolerant attitudes towards others. The setting is building up its activities and resources to support children to learn about cultures other than their own appropriately. Practitioners encourage all children to participate in the full range of activities they offer.

All practitioners are experienced and have suitable qualifications and expertise to teach all aspects of the foundation phase curriculum. The setting provides many

good quality resources that support children's learning well. Practitioners often use these resources creatively to encourage children's involvement in different activities. For example, practitioners and children have turned the outdoor play shed into an elves' workshop that children enjoy using to practise their cutting, sticking and measuring skills as they wrap presents and make decorations in preparation for Christmas.

The interior of the setting is spacious, attractive and well-organised. Practitioners have created a rich learning environment in the large outdoor area, which they use effectively to support children's learning.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

The setting leader and the skilled management committee work together effectively to develop clear aims and objectives. These focus appropriately on providing a warm, caring and stimulating environment for the children. They have a clear vision for the future of the setting and are committed to ensuring continuous improvement that enables children to thrive. The roles and responsibilities of leaders and practitioners are clear and ensure that sessions run smoothly.

The setting leader, supported by the management committee and the local authority advisory teacher, sets suitable targets for herself and her staff. The leader takes good account of advice and suggestions to improve standards and provision, and secures the commitment of all practitioners to implement actions to help the setting move forward. For example, advice from the advisory teacher and the school's reception class teacher has led the set to provide a wider range of experiences that challenge children of all ages and abilities more appropriately. Occasionally, however, leaders try to implement too many actions at the same time. This means that the workload is considerable and actions are not always well enough embedded to have the greatest impact on children.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has appropriate processes in place to identify its strengths and weaknesses. Overall, the setting leader, practitioners and members of the management committee contribute effectively to evaluating the setting's provision and outcomes. For example, practitioners use the local authority's toolkit to evaluate the setting's work every year. Parents complete regular questionnaires, children make suggestions about what they would like to learn, and teacher members of the management committee visit the setting to observe and help identify strengths and areas for development. These processes, along with on-entry assessment and their regular observations of children provide leaders with important information that helps them to set useful targets for improvement.

Staff monitor progress toward these targets appropriately throughout the year. As a result of their regular evaluations of progress, they have made several beneficial changes, such as the way in which they encourage children to consolidate their literacy and numeracy skills. Staff are developing a suitable understanding of the importance of focusing their monitoring on the impact on outcomes for children. However, they do not always identify what they want to achieve clearly enough for them to measure progress easily and effectively.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has developed successful partnerships that enhance its provision for children. Partnerships with parents are strong. They receive useful information through social media and the parent noticeboard about the setting's policies and procedures and the activities planned for the week. Practitioners provide parents with information about their children's progress at the end of each session and through end of the year written reports. These opportunities help parents to understand their children's early education and enables them to support their children effectively at home.

The setting makes good use of the local community to develop children's social and communication skills. For example, visits to a local café and a bus ride to visit a supermarket in the nearby town enable children to make close links with their community. Very strong links with the local primary school provide experiences that the setting alone could not offer, including the use of the school hall for family events and regular visits to the school for assemblies and special occasions, such as Harvest Festival. These activities are particularly beneficial in preparing children for the transition into reception class at the school.

Partnerships with other agencies are developing well. The setting offers placements to students from a local further education college and this provides worthwhile support to practitioners and brings new ideas into the setting. Practitioners benefit from regular support and advice from the local authority advisory teacher. This encourages them to focus closely on improving outcomes for children and helps to assure the quality of their provision.

Resource management: Good

The setting leader and the management committee have a good understanding of their budget and monitor and manage the setting's financial resources carefully. Clearly defined processes mean that spending focuses appropriately on the setting's priorities, particularly those that will have the greatest benefit to children. Practitioners use the accommodation well and they benefit from sharing resources and grounds with the primary school on the same site.

The setting makes good use of practitioners' specialisms, for example to raise the status of the Welsh language in the setting and improve practitioners' and children's standards in Welsh. The setting leader and practitioners have regular opportunities to attend training and develop their skills, although occasionally training does not link well to the setting's own priorities. Appraisal of staff is effective and identifies suitable targets for professional learning. These targets link closely to the setting's priorities for improvement, but also offer opportunities for staff to identify their own professional priorities. Cluster meetings provides suitable opportunities for practitioners to share ideas and experiences with staff from other settings and encourages them to reflect on their own practice.

In view of the good standards that children achieve and the quality of the provision and leadership, the setting provides good value for money.

Glossary of terms

Areas of Learning	<p>These are the seven areas that make up the Foundation Phase curriculum in English-medium settings. (Welsh-medium settings are not required to teach Welsh language development as this is already the language of the setting.) The Areas of Learning are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity • language, literacy and communications skills • mathematical development • Welsh language development • knowledge and understanding of the world • physical development • creative development
CIW	Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	This local authority partnership approves settings as providers of education. It also has the power to withdraw funding from settings which do not comply with the partnerships conditions of registration.
Foundation Phase	The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from three to seven years of age
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012
Local authority advisory teacher	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings that provide education for three and four-year-olds.
Mudiad Meithrin	A voluntary organisation, which aims to give every young child in Wales the opportunity to benefit from early years services and experiences through the medium of Welsh
Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.

National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)	This organisation aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education